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THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPORTS AS A SOURCE OF FOOD 1/

Proportion of Food Imported

About 12 percent of all food consumed by U. S. civilians in 1964 was imported or shipped in from U. S. Territories (table 7 and fig. 2). Both fishery products and farm products are included in this estimate. Many foods are entirely domestically produced, but many others, primarily tropical commodities such as coffee, tea, cocoa products, bananas, many of the tree nuts, several oils and oilseeds, and such fishery products as spiny lobsters are mostly imported. Close to half of the agricultural foods imported last year are classed as either noncompetitive or only partly competitive with U. S.-produced products.

The average proportion of imported food to all U. S. food consumed has remained fairly stable in recent years, despite fluctuations among foods. The 12-percent average for 1964 compares with 13 percent for the 6 years previous. Since 1962, the data are on a 50-State basis. Prior to that time, inshipments from Alaska, Hawaii, and U. S. Territories are included with imports; canned and cured fishery products are an exception (footnote 7, table 7).

In contrast to stability in the overall importance of imports, exports of agricultural products have increased sharply in recent years. In 1964, exports (including outshipments to Territories) accounted for 15 percent of the total use of all U. S. farm commodities, up from 9 percent in 1955. Exports amounted to 11 percent of the total use of food products and 19 percent of the use of nonfood products. Exports accounted for 18 percent of U. S. production of all agricultural products in 1964, 5 percent of the production of livestock products and 23 percent of the output of crop products (including feed and seed).

Animal and Crop Products

Only $3\frac{1}{2}$ percent of all animal products used for food in the United States was imported last year, compared with about a third of the direct food use of crop products (excluding indirect use through livestock). The percentage of imports of animal products was down from $4\frac{1}{2}$ percent in 1963 mainly because of sharp declines in imports of beef and mutton. But the proportion of animal products imported for food use was about double the $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent level of 1955. Imports of food from crops have remained near a third of total U. S. food use of crops since 1955, the first year compared. A change between 1961 and 1962 in handling shipments from Hawaii reduced significantly the proportion of sugar and sirups shown as imported; it accounted for most of the decline in imports for total crop products between these years.

Coffee is by far the most important imported food item. Valued in terms of 1957-59 farm (or dockside) prices, coffee accounted for 45 percent of total imports for civilian food last year. The other major food imports were beef and veal, 11 percent; sugar and sirups, 9 percent; bananas, 9 percent; cocoa products, 8 percent; and fishery products, 5 percent. Crop products accounted for 80 percent of the total and animal products 20 percent.

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Table 7.—Proportions of U. S. food consumption supplied by imports, by product group, 1955-64 1/

| Group | 1955 | 1956 | 1957 | 1958 | 1959 | 1960 | 1961 | 1962 | 1963 | 1964 2/ |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|---------|
| | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. |
| <u>Crops</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Coffee, tea, cocoa | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 99.8 | 99.8 |
| Bananas | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 99.8 | 99.8 | 99.7 |
| Other fruit | 6.0 | 6.3 | 6.0 | 6.2 | 5.7 | 6.3 | 7.9 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 3.4 |
| Oils and oilseeds, total | 18.9 | 15.5 | 16.0 | 16.1 | 13.9 | 12.8 | 14.6 | 16.6 | 14.2 | 13.2 |
| Domestic crops 3/ | 4.6 | 4.7 | 5.5 | 1.0 | .5 | .4 | .6 | .5 | .3 | .2 |
| Sugar and sirups | 69.2 | 68.8 | 67.5 | 66.5 | 67.2 | 66.0 | 63.8 | 53.3 | 50.6 | 42.9 |
| Treenuts, total | 33.9 | 29.9 | 32.3 | 34.4 | 31.2 | 30.3 | 24.6 | 24.6 | 12.2 | 24.0 |
| Domestic crops 4/ | 10.4 | 8.4 | 7.0 | 10.9 | 10.0 | 7.0 | 4.9 | 2.8 | 1.5 | 3.7 |
| Vegetables | 1.1 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| Food grains | .8 | 1.1 | 1.2 | .7 | .8 | .7 | .6 | .6 | .5 | .4 |
| Feed grains | .2 | .3 | .4 | .2 | .1 | .1 | .1 | .1 | .1 | .1 |
| All crops | 33.6 | 33.8 | 34.6 | 34.0 | 34.5 | 34.3 | 34.7 | 32.5 | 31.7 | 31.7 |
| <u>Animal products</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beef and veal | 1.4 | 1.2 | 2.3 | 5.6 | 6.4 | 4.4 | 5.7 | 7.7 | 8.4 | 5.6 |
| Pork and lard | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.7 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| Lamb | .1 | 6/ | .1 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 2.6 | 1.4 |
| Mutton | 2.1 | 2.1 | 7.0 | 45.9 | 72.5 | 61.0 | 65.2 | 71.8 | 74.6 | 64.7 |
| Dairy products | .3 | .3 | .3 | .4 | .4 | .4 | .5 | .5 | .6 | .5 |
| Poultry and eggs | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ | 5/ |
| Honey | 3.8 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 4.6 | 3.2 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 2.2 |
| Fishery products 6/ | 25.8 | 26.3 | 28.0 | 27.9 | 34.2 | 30.1 | 32.8 | 33.8 | 34.1 | 34.6 |
| All animal products | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.8 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 4.2 | 4.5 | 3.4 |
| All food | 11.4 | 11.3 | 12.0 | 12.7 | 13.2 | 12.6 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 12.0 | 12.0 |

1/ Quantities weighted using 1955-59 U. S. average farm and wharf prices, except dockside prices used for products not commercially produced in the United States. Use of an imported item was assumed proportional to its domestic use. Imports for civilian food use were divided by total civilian food use in deriving percentages; include feed and seed. Prior to 1962, U. S. consumption was based on 48 contiguous States and imports included major shipments from Territories, Alaska, and Hawaii; imports are on a 50-State basis beginning with 1962. 2/ Preliminary. 3/ Total of peanuts, cottonseed, soybeans, and sunflower. 4/ Total of almonds, filberts, walnuts, and pecans. 5/ Less than 0.05 percent. 6/ Canned fishery products from Alaska, Hawaii, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico and cured products from Alaska are counted as domestic production rather than imports. In addition, imported raw materials for domestic processing are not included as imports.

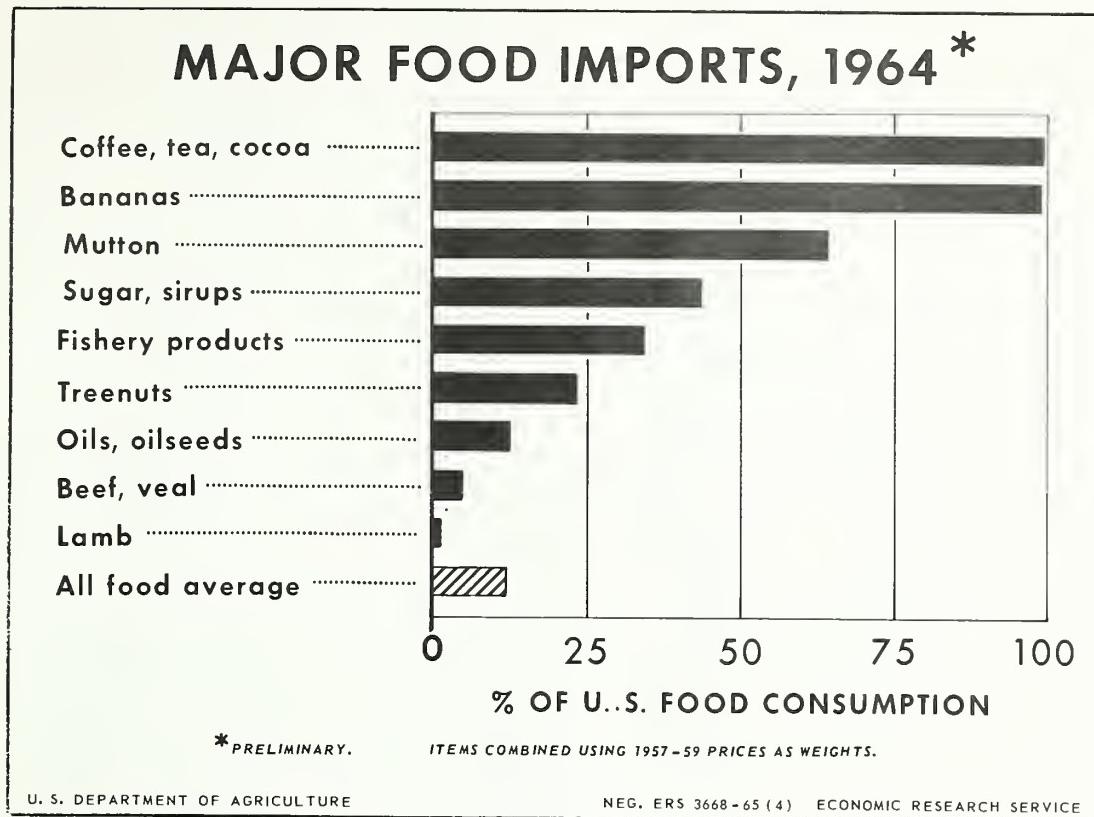


Figure 2

Imports of red meat in 1964 declined about 25 percent (product weight) from the 1963 level. The decline was an abrupt change from the uptrend of the previous few years. Beef and veal, the largest item, was down 29 percent. Mutton and lamb imports were nearly cut in half. But pork imports remained at the same level. Large U. S. supplies and reduced prices, particularly for beef, and reduced European supplies accompanied by increased prices were primarily responsible for the turn in trend of meat imports. Traditional European suppliers of beef have returned to their previous markets. Imports last year were not up to levels permitted by the voluntary limitations agreed upon by major exporting countries. Big domestic supplies and the strong foreign market have resulted in United States exports of small quantities of meat to Europe.

It is important to distinguish between imports of mutton and imports of lamb. Imports of mutton, largely from Australia, have provided a substantial part of U. S. mutton consumption since about 1958. Imports of mutton were triple the imports of lamb in 1964. U. S. lamb consumption comes almost entirely from domestic sources--only $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent of U. S. requirements were imported in 1964. Imports in 1963 were unusually large, but still accounted for only $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent of U. S. consumption.

Imports of sugars and sirups (including inshipments from Territories) dropped well below half of U. S. consumption last year. U. S. sugar production rose and imports dropped significantly. Imports have been declining steadily in importance over the past 10 years, while domestic production has been

increasing. The shift to a 50-State basis in 1962 excluded Hawaiian sugar from imports since then.

The importance of foreign sources of oils and oilseeds used for food in the United States has declined since 1955. Most of the imported items are not grown in volume in this country. They include copra, coconut oil, olive oil, sesame, palm kernels, and palm oil. Only a fraction of 1 percent of the food use of oils and oilseeds that are grown domestically is supplied by imports. An analogous situation exists for tree nuts: In most years, a fourth to a third of total U. S. consumption is imported but these items consist largely of tree nuts not grown in volume in the United States. Imports include pignolias, pistachios, Brazil nuts, cashew nuts, and chestnuts. The domestically produced nuts include almonds, filberts, pecans, and walnuts.

Imports supplied about a third of total U. S. consumption of edible fishery products last year, a sharp gain from a decade ago. In addition, a substantial amount of fishery products were imported as raw materials for the domestic-processing industry. Taking these imports into account, about half the U. S. consumption was derived from foreign sources in 1964. U. S. production has remained reasonably stable over this period but imports have risen steadily. Most of the imports are fresh or frozen though substantial amounts are canned. Shrimp is the most important fishery product imported, in dollar value. Tuna (both canned and frozen), groundfish, and lobster also are important imports. Imports of shellfish have accounted for much of the increase in total imports of fishery products in recent years.

Other Agricultural Imports

About 80 percent of all imports of agricultural products (excluding fishery products) were used for civilian food last year. Wool, cotton, and tobacco were the primary nonfood imports; they made up 14 percent of all imports in 1964. Other nonfood agricultural imports, such as hides and skins, nonfood uses of imports classed as foods, and military use of food accounted for the remaining 6 percent.

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